

## TEXT — 4:1-9

1. Hear my sons, the instruction of a father,  
And attend to know understanding;
2. For I give you good doctrine;  
Forsake ye not my law.
3. For I was a son unto my father,  
Tender and only beloved in the sight of my mother.
4. And he taught me, and said unto me:  
Let thy heart retain my words;  
Keep my commandments, and live;
5. Get wisdom, get understanding;  
Forget not, neither decline from the words of my  
mouth;
6. Forsake her not, and she will preserve thee;  
Love her, and she will keep thee.
7. Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom;  
Yea, with all thy getting get understanding.
8. Exalt her, and she will promote thee;  
She will bring thee to honor, when thou dost embrace  
her.
9. She will give to thy head a chaplet of grace;  
A crown of beauty will she deliver to thee.

## STUDY QUESTIONS OVER 4:1-9

1. Why the change from the usual "son" to "sons" in v. 1?
2. What does "doctrine" mean?
3. What does v. 3 show to be the way parents should feel concerning their children?
4. What kind of parent is described in v. 4?
5. How many times is "get" used in the book of Proverbs (v. 5)?
6. Reword v. 6.
7. Connect the thought of v. 7 with the author of Proverbs.
8. What will wisdom do for its possessor (v. 8)?
9. What was a chaplet (v. 9)?

## PARAPHRASE OF 4:1-9

- 1-6. Young men, listen to me as you would to your father. Listen, and grow wise, for I speak the truth—don't turn away. For I, too, was once a man, tenderly loved by my

mother as an only child, and the companion of my father. He told me never to forget his words. "If you follow them," he said, "you will have a long and happy life." "Learn to be wise," he said, "and develop good judgment and common sense! I cannot over-emphasize this point." Cling to wisdom--she will protect you. Love her--she will guard you.

- 7-9. Determination to be wise is the first step toward becoming wise! And with your wisdom, develop common sense and good judgment. If you exalt wisdom, she will exalt you. Hold her fast and she will lead you to great honor; she will place a beautiful crown upon your head.

#### COMMENTS ON 4:1-9

V. 1. Only three times in the entire book does the author address his material to his "sons" (plural) instead of to his "son" (singular): here; 5:7; 7:24. No reason is easily discernible for the change at this and the other places. "Hear" is used many times in Proverbs as are "instruction" and "understanding". Similar passages: "My son, hear the instruction of thy father" (Prov. 1:8); "Come, ye children, hearken unto me" (Psa. 34:11); "Fathers...nuture them in the chastening and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4).

V. 2. "Doctrine" means "teaching". The father is sure that his teaching is "good", for he has been over the road, has experienced much, has observed a lot, and has come to sound and studied conclusions, and he has the welfare of his children at heart. For the most part children normally accept their parents' teachings as good. Because what he was teaching was good, he insists that they not forsake his law.

V. 3. As Solomon instructs his own children, he recalls that he too was once a child, a son of his father David (who picked him to be his successor: I Kings 1:32-35) and tender and beloved in the sight of his mother (Bathsheba). Every grown-up should be able to look back upon his childhood days and feel this way about his parents. Our verse reminds us that those who are now fathers were once sons, and those who now teach were once taught.

V. 4. David took time to teach and prepare Solomon for the great task that was before him in life. Such a constant, several-years' task takes a father's time and attention, and it

involves a recognition of divine responsibility and a desire to see one's son grow up to be what he ought to be. Fathers should be more than sires and material providers for their children: "Fathers...nuture them in the chastening and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4). The direct quotation begins in this verse, but it is debatable just where the quotation ends. Some say the quotation runs to the end of the chapter; some say through v. 9 (where the Hebrew paragraph ends). As a conjecture we would place the end quotation at the conclusion of v. 9. David urged Solomon to keep his teachings within his heart, and he assured him of "life" as a result. Prov. 7:1,2 is very similar: "My son, keep my words, And lay up my commandments with thee. Keep my commandments and live."

V. 5. "Get" is used many times in the book of Proverbs. In English we might make a play on words within this verse by saying, "Get wisdom and understanding and forget not what I am teaching you." Good parents are ambitious for what their children will grow out to become--actually more so than the children themselves at the time.

V. 6. That which we "love", we do not "forsake". Therefore, David called upon Solomon to love wisdom, "forsake her not", and his promise was that wisdom would "preserve" and "keep" him. Wisdom would keep him from evil, from evil men, from evil women, from mistakes, from sorrows and disappointments, and from a sad ending. And it will do the same for each of us today! The forgetting in v. 5 would be unintentional while the forsaking in this verse could be done while realizing what one was doing.

V. 7. With all of thy getting of various things in life, be sure to get wisdom, and this Solomon did (I Kings 4:29-34; I Kings 10:1-7). The New Testament would teach that the salvation of one's soul is the principal thing in life, but Proverbs, preceding the Christian age, makes wisdom the principal thing, and yet there need not be a clash, for wisdom--true wisdom--will cause one to be saved: the "wise" man builds his house upon the rock of Christ (Matt. 7:24,25); a knowledge of God's Word causes one to be "wise unto salvation" (II Tim. 3:15). But how does one go about getting wisdom? First of all it must be sought by prayer (Jas. 1:5; I Kings 3:5-12), and then man must constantly sit at the feet of the three great "teachers". They are: (1) instruction (learning by listening to what others would teach us--Prov. 9:9); (2)

observation (learning by keeping one's eyes open, learning from the experiences of others--Psa. 37:25; Prov. 24:30-34); and (3) experience--learning from your own experiences--Phil. 4:10-12).

V. 8. The son would "exalt" wisdom by making it his chief concern, and his love for wisdom is couched in the words, "When thou dost embrace her." If he would exalt wisdom, wisdom would exalt him just as if he turned his back on wisdom, wisdom would turn her back upon him (Prov. 1:24-31). Learning cannot be over-emphasized unless one learns the wrong thing (Col. 2:8), unless one fails to add the other essentials to character-development (II Pet. 1:5-7), and unless one becomes conceited over his knowledge (Rom. 12:16). "Knowledge is power; and it is truly astonishing to see what influence true learning has. Nothing is so universally respected" ("Clarke").

V. 9. Wisdom will (in time) give or deliver to one's head a chaplet (wreath or garland) of grace, a crown of beauty. Similar passages: Prov. 1:9; Prov. 3:22. These promotions and honors among men is the exalting referred to in v. 8.

#### TEST QUESTIONS OVER 4:1-9

1. How many times does the author of Proverbs address his material to "sons" (plural) instead of to "son" (singular) (v. 1)?
2. How does the father know that his teaching is "good" (v. 2)?
3. Who were Solomon's father and mother (v. 3)?
4. What did David take time to do with reference to his Solomon (v. 4)?
5. What word in v. 5 is used many times in Proverbs?
6. What are some of the things David realized that wisdom would keep Solomon from (v. 6)?
7. Does there have to be a clash between "salvation" and "wisdom" (v. 7)?
8. What are man's 3 great "teachers" (v. 7)?
9. What commandment concerning wisdom is found in v. 8?
10. When will wisdom deliver chaplets and crowns to one's head (v. 9)?

#### TEXT — 4:10-19

10. Hear, O my son, and receive my sayings;  
And the years of thy life shall be many.

11. I have taught thee in the way of wisdom;  
I have led thee in paths of uprightness.
12. When thou goest, thy steps shall not be straitened;  
And if thou runnest, thou shalt not stumble.
13. Take fast hold of instruction; let her not go:  
Keep her; for she is thy life.
14. Enter not into the path of the wicked,  
And walk not in the way of evil men.
15. Avoid it, pass not by it;  
Turn from it, and pass on.
16. For they sleep not, except they do evil;  
And their sleep is taken away, unless they cause some  
to fall.
17. For they eat of the bread of wickedness,  
And drink the wine of violence.
18. But the path of the righteous is as the dawning light,  
That shineth more and more unto the perfect day.
19. The way of the wicked is as darkness:  
They know not at what they stumble.

## STUDY QUESTIONS OVER 4:10-19

1. Tie v. 10 in with the first commandment of the Ten Commandments that contains a promise.
2. What is the difference between "taught" and "led" in v. 11?
3. What does "straitened" mean (v. 12)?
4. What is the significance of taking "fast hold" of instruction (v. 13)?
5. What was the practical value of the Horatio Alger, Jr. books for boys years ago (v. 14)?
6. What 4 pointed instructions are given in v. 15?
7. According to v. 16 how perverse can some people get?
8. What is the "diet" of perverse people (v. 17)?
9. Comment upon "beautiful" in v. 18.
10. Living in sin is like walking in ..... (v. 19).

## PARAPHRASE OF 4:10-19

10. My son, listen to me and do as I say, and you will have a long, good life.
- 11-13. I would have you learn this great fact: that a life of

doing right is the wisest life there is. If you live that kind of life, you'll not limp or stumble as you run. Carry out my instructions; don't forget them, for they will lead you to real living.

14-17. Don't do as the wicked do. Avoid their haunts--turn away, go somewhere else, for evil men don't sleep until they've done their evil deed for the day. They can't rest unless they cause someone to stumble and fall. They eat wickedness and violence!

18,19. But the good man walks along in the ever brightening light of God's favor; the dawn gives way to morning splendor, while the evil man gropes and stumbles in the dark.

#### COMMENTS ON 4:10-19

V. 10. If our conjecture is right, the direct quotation of David's words to Solomon ended with v. 9, in which case we return to this verse in Solomon's words to his son. Just as Solomon had received the "sayings" of his father and had passed some of them on in vs. 4-9, so now he calls upon his son to receive his sayings. While his son Rehoboam did not demonstrate wisdom in I Kings 12:13,14, he was probably wise as a rule. Honoring one's parents by listening to them and doing as they teach carry the promise of length of life: here and in Exo. 20:12; Eph. 6:1-3; Prov. 3:2. Wisdom itself can be the means of lengthening one's life just as folly can shorten it. The promise of God can of itself lengthen it just as disobedience to His will can nullify the promise. But so can sin enter into the length of one's life: "Vice and intemperance impair the health and shorten the days of the wicked; while true religion, sobriety, and temperance prolong them. The principal part of our diseases spring from indolence, intemperance, and disorderly passions. Religion excites to industry, promotes sober habits, destroys evil passions, and harmonizes the soul; and thus, by preventing many diseases, necessarily prolongs life" ("Clarke").

V. 11. As a father he had "taught" with words, and he had "led" with example, and unless the latter combines with the former, a father is wasting his words. The inspired Luke was as much interested in what Jesus did as he was in what He said (Acts 1:1). Paul both taught and set an example (Acts 20:20,35).

Our verse indicates that the wisdom contained in teaching leads to uprightness of living.

V. 12. "Straitened" means "limited". Following the wisdom of parental teaching will lead to a full and not a limited life; life will open itself to a wise person. He may be born in obscurity but become a well known person of renown. He may begin at the bottom and end up on top. "Runnest" would signify "going fast"; "stumble" would signify an "abrupt stopping of that progress". Wisdom would keep one from becoming broken and ruined at the height of progress. *Psa. 18:36* is a similar verse: "Thou hast enlarged my steps under me, And my feet have not slipped."

V. 13. Do not dilly-dally about the matter of learning. Be in earnest about it. The wording of this verse shows how important instruction is. It is about like saying to a man overboard who cannot swim, "Take fast hold of the lifeline; let it not go; keep a tight hold on it, for it is thy life." How many of us fully grasp as we should the importance of learning?

V. 14. Neither begin ("enter not") nor continue ("walk not") in the way of the wicked. "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the wicked" (*Psa. 1:1*). "My son, walk not thou in the way with them; Refrain thy foot from their path" (*Prov. 1:15*). "Clarke": "Never associate with those whose life is irregular or sinful; never accompany them in any of their acts of transgression." One will never walk the way of an evil man unless he enters their path; to do so is to prefer their way to God's way. The Horatio Alger, Jr. series of books for boys was good for sounding the same warning, and they were good reading matter for growing, developing minds.

V. 15. How can one keep from entering the wrong path? Know that it is wrong, and then "avoid" it--stay away from it, stay as far away from it as you can (like you would a rattlesnake den or a vicious dog). Adam and Eve walked with God as long as they did not go near the forbidden tree. The careful Joseph tried never to be with the wicked wife of Potipher (*Gen. 39:10*). *Prov. 5:8* says, "Remove thy way from her, And come not nigh the door of her house."

V. 16. Some are so wicked that they live just as this verse says. Instead of living as a Christian ("To me to live is Christ"--*Phil 1:21*), to them to live is to "do evil" and to "cause some to fall" (others to join them in the sin-game). When an

older Christian woman was asked about the two men she was caring for, she said, "All they do is sit in front of the television all day, smoke their cigarettes, and run down the church of Christ." What a way to live! They know not God, and they are not obedient to the gospel; therefore, they will be punished with everlasting destruction: "...the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with the angels of his power in flaming fire, rendering vengeance to them that know not God, and to them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus: who shall suffer punishment, even eternal destruction from the face of the Lord and from the glory of his might" (II Thess. 1:7-9).

V. 17. "Violence" is the only item in some people's "diet" of life--this is what they "eat" and "drink" everyday. With such perverted "appetites", they have no "hunger" for God and no "thirst" for righteousness.

V. 18. "But" is set in contrast with the foregoing verse. Besides the way the wicked live, there is also a "path" that the righteous follow. This good path is illuminated with the light of God. When we begin in that path, it is like beholding the first rays of dawn; as we follow, the day gets brighter and brighter, and we can see the righteousness of God's way more and more; in time this path will bring us to the "perfect day" (eternity with God). "This verse contains a fine metaphor; it refers to the sun rising above the horizon and the increasing twilight till its beams shine full upon the earth" ("Clarke").

V. 19. In this verse about the wicked we are back in "darkness". Living in sin is like walking in darkness in which one can stumble and fall to his hurt because he could not see what there was to trip over. Jer. 23:12 talks of the wicked walking in "slippery places in the darkness" (can you think of anything more "scary"?). Jesus urged men to walk in His light to avoid the darkness that would come upon them if they didn't; He also said that "he that walketh in the darkness knoweth not whither he goeth" (John 12:35).

#### TEST QUESTIONS OVER 4:10-19

1. What promise does honoring one's parents and their teachings carry (v. 10)?
2. How important is example in a parent (v. 11)?
3. Comment on "runnest" in v. 12.
4. What comparison did the comments on v. 13 make?



5. What double prohibition is laid down in v. 14?
6. What young man in Gen. was careful to avoid the way of evil (v. 15)?
7. What will happen to those who are evil and do not know God in their lives (v. 16)?
8. How do the wicked show their perverted "appetites" (v. 17)?
9. What is the "perfect day" to which we hope someday to arrive (v. 18)?
10. What did Jesus say about the wicked and "darkness" (v. 19)?

## TEXT — 4:20-27

20. My son, attend to my words;  
Incline thine ear unto my sayings.
21. Let them not depart from thine eyes;  
Keep them in the midst of thy heart.
22. For they are life unto those that find them,  
And health to all their flesh.
23. Keep thy heart with all diligence;  
For out of it are the issues of life.
24. Put away from thee a wayward mouth,  
And perverse lips put far from thee.
25. Let thine eyes look right on,  
And let thine eyelids look straight before thee.
26. Make level the path of thy feet,  
And let all thy ways be established.
27. Turn not to the right hand nor to the left:  
Remove thy foot from evil.

## STUDY QUESTIONS OVER 4:20-27

1. Why does the father go over the same thought so often (v. 20)?
2. What 2 parts of a person are spoken of in v. 21?
3. Is v. 22 speaking literally or figuratively?
4. Memorize v. 23.
5. Find the parallels in v. 24.
6. What is the meaning of v. 25?
7. In life what should one be interested in as brought out in v. 26?
8. How much deviation from the proper path is allowed (v. 27)?

## PARAPHRASE OF 4:20-27

- 20-22. Listen, son of mine, to what I say. Listen carefully. Keep these thoughts ever in mind; let them penetrate deep within your heart: for they will mean real life for you, and radiant health.
- 23-27. Above all else, guard your affections. For they influence everything else in your life. Spurn the careless kiss of a prostitute. Stay far from her. Look straight ahead; don't even turn your head to look. Watch your step. Stick to the path and be safe. Don't side-track; pull back your foot from danger.

## COMMENTS ON 4:20-27

V. 20. Oh, the earnestness of the father's instructions and entreaties as he thinks upon these matters!

V. 21. That Rehoboam would keep what his father was teaching him ever before his eyes and ever in his heart was so important that Solomon mentions it so often in this section of the book. Prov. 3:21 is similar: "My son, let them not depart from thine eyes; Keep sound wisdom and discretion."

V. 22. The great physical blessings of "life" and "health" are promised if the son will follow the father's good teachings throughout life. Several times is "life" promised on this basis: "Length of days, and long life...shall they add to thee" (Prov. 3:2); "Length of days is in her right hand" (Prov. 3:16); "Hear, O my son, and receive my sayings; and the years of thy life shall be many" (Prov. 4:10). Prov. 3:8 also promises "health" on this basis: "It shall be health to thy naval and marrow to thy bones."

V. 23. Here is one of the best known, most memorized verses in all of Proverbs. The reason is obvious: the outward words and deeds and course of life are but the manifestation of what is in one's heart. Other passages: "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. The good man out of his good treasure bringeth forth good things: and the evil man out of his evil treasure bringeth forth evil things" (Matt. 12:34,35); "The things which proceed out of the mouth come forth out of the heart...Out of the heart come forth evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, railings" (Matt. 15:18,19); "Let each man do as he hath purposed in his heart" (II Cor. &7). The Pharisees kept the outside but neglected the inside. Jesus pointed out that if they cleaned the inside, the

outside would automatically be all right: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also" (Matt. 23:25,26).

V. 24. A "wayward" person is one who has gone astray, so a "wayward" mouth is a mouth that speaks wrong things. "Perverse lips" is but a repetition of the same type of mouth. Wrong speech is so detrimental and out of place that our verse says it should be "put away", "put far" away! So, say nothing wrong--don't even come close. In other words, use nothing that is out-and-out wrong and not even that which is "shady". One will be judged by his speech: "Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned" (Matt. 12:36,37).

V. 25. After urging the son's care of his "heart" in v. 23 and bidding him to put away "perverse lips" in v. 24, he now calls upon him to direct his "eyes" and not let them wander upon sights that would be detrimental. In the next 2 verses he will speak of his "feet". Especially when it comes to "women", this is such an important and right way to keep from lusting in one's heart (Matt. 5:28; II Pet. 2:14). Job said, "I made a covenant with mine eyes; How then should I look upon a virgin?" (Job 31:1). This is a covenant that every man needs to make with his eyes. Let his own wife be the "desire of" his "eyes" even as Ezekiel's wife was to his (Eze. 24:16,18).

V. 26. In everyday life we try to keep from falling. Every irregularity in the sidewalk and every object in the pathway is a potential stumblingblock that could result in a fall. In life we should avoid everything that would cause us to stumble and fall; we should want our ways to be "established."

V. 27. Don't deviate from the right path in either way. We have to be careful of ditches on both sides of the road. One who is in the ditch is going nowhere. Other passages: "Ye shall observe to do therefore as Jehovah your God hat commanded you: ye shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left" (Deut. 5:32); "Thou shalt hearken unto the commandments of Jehovah thy God...to observe them and do them, and shalt not turn aside from any of the words which I command you this day, to the right hand, or to the left" (Deut. 28:13,14); "Observe

to do according to all the law...turn not from it to the right hand or to the left" (Josh. 1:7). In putting away pride, we must be careful not to become sloven; in putting away rashness, we should not become soft; etc.

#### TEST QUESTIONS OVER 4:20-27

1. Find the parallels in v. 20.
2. Rehoboam was to keep his father's instructions before his ..... and in the midst of his ..... (v. 21).
3. What 2 blessings of obedience are promised in v. 22?
4. What great fact of life is contained in v. 23?
5. How seriously important is one's speech (v. 24)?
6. What was Job's covenant with his eyes (v. 25)?
7. Comment on v. 26.
8. What do you get from turning not to the "right hand" nor to the "left" (v. 27)?

#### LAZINESS IS WASTEFULNESS

The Bible reveals waste to be a terrible thing. This is not a saying from the Bible, but it is surely true: "Wilful waste makes woeful want." We see that in the prodigal son. But, listen to what 18:9 says, "He also that is slothful in his work is brother to him that is a great waster." You can see how that would be: the waster destroys that which is produced while the slothful man fails to produce it in the first place.

There are those who are ambitious, but wasteful, and they think it is so terrible when people are lazy. On the other hand, there are those who talk about how wasteful some people are, but they themselves are too lazy to work. Proverbs says in the final analysis, both are brothers.